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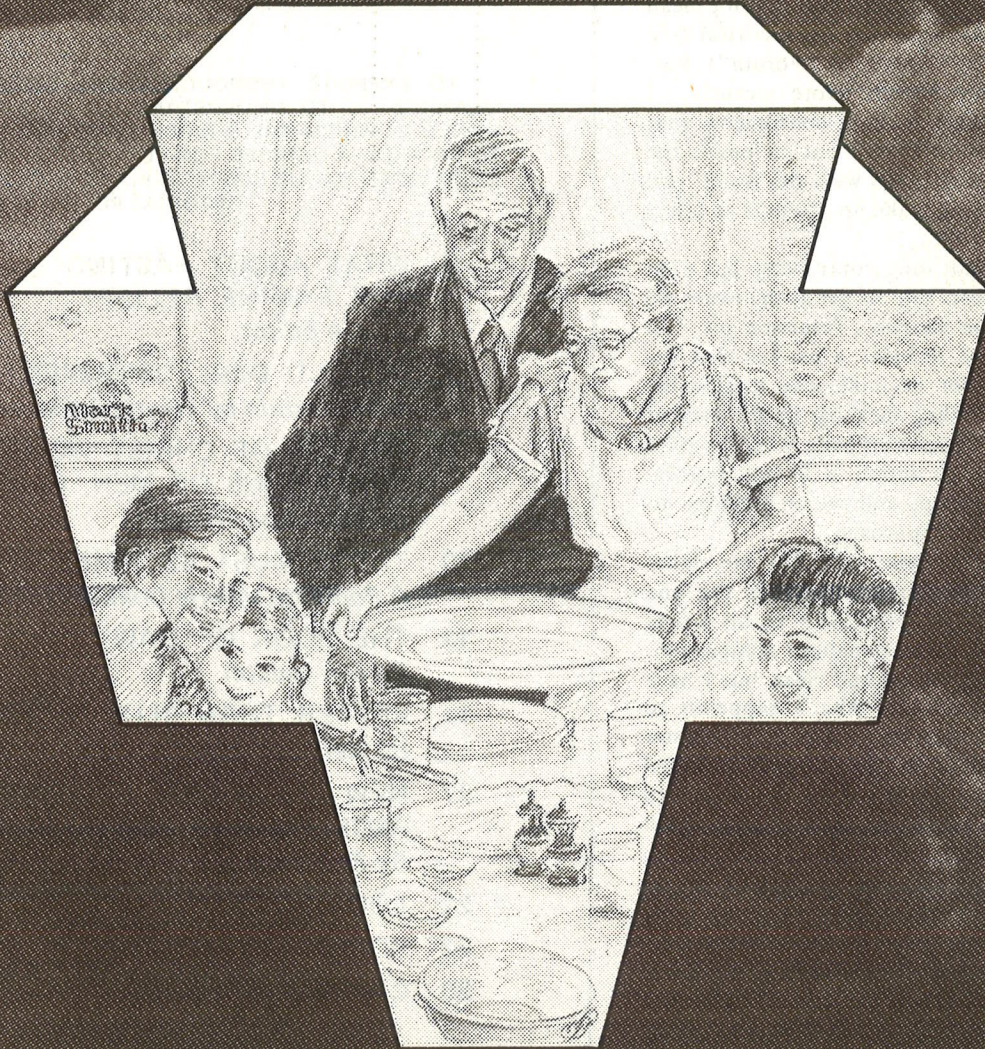
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NOVEMBER

MISSION

1975



FASTING FOR FAMINE RELIEF

Response to our statement of editorial direction, as *Mission* moves into a new phase of Christian journalism, has been gratifying. This doesn't mean that some have not been critical (see *Cecil May's* letter, in "Forum"). But, as Jimmy Jividen wrote recently, "I believe that it is in controversy that truth can be beaten out, as long as the controversy stays with the issues, and the authors make an attempt at integrity."

And not only controversy but even fiction can help us get at the issues we face. *Jim Galuhn's* futuristic piece in this issue includes a parable that describes, for example, the tension between finding meaning in the present and in the past. That's where a good deal of the action is in any restorationist group, and we're indebted to Jim for this approach.

Another issue that, for me, takes some dialogue to clarify is the one raised by *Neil Gallagher* in his article decrying institutionalized compassion. I hear him loud and clear, but I have some questions. What's supposed to happen when folk refuse to administer compassion in the needful, personal way Neil advocates? Is it helpful to have an institution there to serve, however inadequately? Maybe this isn't an either/or situation. Somehow it reminds me of memorized prayers. I like them more personal and spontaneous; but at times when I just honestly don't feel like inventing prayers with my little girl at night, I find myself relying on the "institution" of such form-prayers as, "Father, we thank thee for the night. . . ." What do you think?

Speaking of prayer, we have received some good articles on the subject and its modern interpretation and use. Any more entries, for that special issue on the topic?

—RD

MISSION

TO EXPLORE THOROUGHLY THE SCRIPTURES AND THEIR MEANING . . . TO UNDERSTAND AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE THE WORLD IN WHICH THE CHURCH LIVES AND HAS HER MISSION . . . TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNICATING THE MEANING OF GOD'S WORD TO OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD."

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BY THE EDITOR

WHAT ABOUT FASTING FOR FAMINE RELIEF?

Once again, thousands of American Christians are about to sit down to sumptuous Thanksgiving feasts. We will spend perhaps an hour consuming those traditional delicacies, then push back from the table wishing we had not overeaten . . . and some will feel vaguely guilty about the fact that, while we gorged, *500 fellow human beings died of starvation.*

Let us not be numbed by the frequent repetition, in recent years, of such figures:

- 12,000 men, women, and children starve daily.

- Americans consume *one-third* of the world's protein although we number only *one-eighteenth* of the world population. Because we like our protein in the form of milk, meat, and eggs, we require *five times* more land, water, and fertilizer to meet our grain requirements than, say, a Nigerian's.

- Brain damage from malnutrition has already guaranteed the mental retardation of uncounted millions. (We are fond of saying that a "famine of the word of God" [Amos 8:11] is worse than physical famine. But since 80 percent of a child's brain capacity is reached during his first three years, a famine of food among children ensures mental and spiritual starvation.)

- Even in the United States, nearly three-fourths of the primary school children of New York City's Lower East Side get half or less than half of the daily vitamin requirements.

Prophets and Technicians

How do we react to such statistics? I confess to a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness at being able to do anything significant about such a massive problem. We wince when we see, on our television screens, the gaunt face, tiny limbs, and protruding stomach of a starving child in Bangladesh or Africa, but how can we help in such a remote situation? We have heard of the difficulty of getting grain and milk past local politicians who sell it on the black market and prevent its reaching those who need it most. We know that even more central to the problem than giveaway programs are food

production techniques—and what does the church know about that?

We are not so insensitive as we are overwhelmed by the enormity and complexity of the task. It's all tied up with the balance of trade among nations, the famines that we hear called "acts of God," the price of foreign oil, technological ignorance, Indian scruples against eating meat, and the gnawing suspicion that backward people with full bellies will just produce more children whom they cannot feed. Perhaps we feel that we have more than enough prophets to damn us for our fatness and hardness of heart; all we need are technicians to show us *how*.

Not so. We know how. The hand-wringers who would lay the blame for world famine on sheer lack of physical capacity are ignoring the spiritual dimension of the problem. Jean Mayer, professor of nutrition at Harvard University, has pointed out that with proper planning and cooperation the wealthy nations could help poor countries feed all their starving millions. Mayer scoffs at the kind of brinkmanship which stares starkly at the dying and speaks of "triage"—the selective separation of salvageable peoples from the hopeless, who must be allowed to quietly starve in order to feed the rest. We *can* feed them all, this technologist says.

Yet, if the failure of massive food relief programs in the past is a fair index, we *will* not feed the world. Nor does the guilt lie fully on middle-class Americans who insist on having a gracious Thanksgiving feast. It is guilt, writ large, from the black marketeer to Secretaries of Agriculture to Satan himself. World hunger is a cosmic problem involving not only the failure to give away food; it involves that larger human failure we call sin. It is not simply a physical problem; it is spiritual as well.

The (Small) Consolation of Religion

But the feasting Christian cannot assuage his seasonal guilt by labeling starvation a "spiritual" problem. If he turns to the Bible and the Consolation of Religion, he finds Scripture anything but consoling:

"Share your bread with the hungry" (Isaiah 58:7).

"Pour yourself out for the hungry" (Isaiah 58:10).

"If a man is righteous and gives his bread to the hungry, he shall surely live" (Ezekiel 18: 5, 7, 9).

"Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food" (Matthew 25:41-42).

"If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need (blame television: we *have* literally seen him, in livid, living color) yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 John 3:17).

Yet, it is to the Scriptures that we *must* turn. We have committed ourselves to a Lord who breathed his breath of inspiration into the Scriptures. We have therefore pledged to walk under the word because of our love for the Word made flesh. Technicians without the Body may search for ways and means outside the Word; the Christian is lured to the Word not merely for "answers" but because he senses that since world hunger is in part a problem of the spirit, it is to be confronted in the power of the Spirit: "the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63).

If we dare enter this realm of spirit/word and flesh/deed, we will admittedly be judged by the blunt demands that we share our bread with the hungry. But there is grace there, too. We are invited in Scripture to a clearer, simpler view of the problem than we receive from the befuddling world of technology and politics. For example, Isaiah's word is disarming in its simplicity as he quotes God not only on the subject of hunger, but on using the time-honored tradition of *the fast* to meet such problems, and, equally significant, on the topic of that uneasy Thanksgiving conscience:

"Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?"

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not hide yourself from your own flesh?

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness shall go before you,
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say, Here I am."

Isaiah 58: 6-9

About the 'Solution'

We must admit that there is a missing dimension here when we compare Isaiah with the Harvard nutritionist: there is no assurance that the problem of the world famine can be solved. As maddening as this is to the conscientious social planner, the main success promised on such issues in Scripture is *the presence of the Lord*. It is what theologians might call an "eschatological" success—one indefinable in purely pragmatic, historical terms, and visible mainly to faith. Hence, Jacques Ellul can make the exasperating statement that social planners are "right in doing what they are doing and wrong in believing they will get anywhere" (*The Meaning of the City*, p. 168.)

But perhaps the pietist, the Bible believer, is a greater sinner here. For too long, he has used this as an escape hatch to avoid social responsibility. It has been too easy to use the failure of scientific, social techniques as an excuse to enjoy our feasts with no social conscience for those who hunger. "You *always* have the poor with you" becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, guaranteed by our refusal to do anything since we cannot do everything.

It is here that the biblical message can help if we really take it seriously on the subject of feasting and fasting. If we dare use the life of our Lord as a model here, we can open ourselves up to his power, and begin to grace a world with it as did he. It is in his life and ministry that we see the sort of "eschatological" success to which we also are invited.

The world in which the Christ appeared was also a world of the poor and the hungry. Yet, as a Jew who knew that God had created food for feasting and a world for enjoying, Jesus "came eating and drinking." He did not wring his hands with guilt when banqueting at Cana of Galilee. God's ultimate will is to go out into the highways and byways and invite us to his Messianic banquet. It is only a temporary detour when disciples fast, as did John's: their world-denial is not a permanent lifestyle but a sign of protest that a fallen world is for a moment forestalling the feast.

But there *were* those signs—not only in the form of fasting, but also in the form of feeding some of the hungry. Simply because his primary mission was not to present an agricultural or social reform scheme that would solve world hunger, Christ did not on that account shun from feeding *some*. His compassion for hungry multitudes results not in group therapy sessions or theological discourses. Jesus fed the hungry.

But he did so without the sweeping, humanitarian optimism which naively sets out to cure such ills today. He fed people not simply because they were hungry, but as a *sign* (John 6:14). His "social action" pointed to a kingdom wherein the hungry "shall eat the wealth of the nations," and "possess a double portion" (Isaiah 61:6, 7).

We must not miss the two-edged sword in the hand of the Lord here. It judges purely humanistic programs whose nerve fails and whose programs collapse when it becomes apparent that their efforts will not "work." They have no eschatological staying power or sense of the presence of God because all the hungry are not fed. But the other edge of the sword cuts with an edge that is equally exquisite: the Lord's action judges the pietist who, because he cannot do it all, does nothing at all. And when he fails to do something, he fails to raise the sign of the kingdom.

Signs We Could Raise

If Christians throughout the well-fed lands would take up the ancient practice of fasting, they could spend the dollars saved on food to save some from starvation and to point to the kingdom. While the hungry are being fed in the name of Christ, we could raise a sign that proclaims that neither starvation nor fasting is the ultimate will of God. We would be saying that God longs for man's wholeness, man's joy. It is only in this interim between the entry of the king into the world and the spreading of his final banquet that wars, ignorance, greed, and famine cause God's beloved to go hungry. It is only because so few accept his banquet invitation and because of the cosmic prevalence of sin that this temporary agony must be endured.

We could raise a sign of solidarity with suffering humanity. When King David's child was dying the king "besought God for the child, and . . . fasted . . . and lay all night on the ground" (2 Samuel 12:16). And shall we not also identify with the dying today by denying ourselves small tokens of sustenance? Shall we not, in fasting, beseech God for the children whose brains are being stunted by malnutrition? He who went into the wilderness and fasted for forty days and nights was not just on a lonely pilgrimage. Mankind awaited him "in the wilderness." Countless thousands of fellow-sufferers welcome him whose self-denial is a sign that both God and brother *care*.

Again, our fasting with them will not save them. We will not dress in sackcloth and ashes as though the suffering of the world were on our own shoulders or as though we can by self-denial make atonement. "*He* [not the faster] has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4). But we could take up the visible sign of feeding the hungry as a symbol not only of our compassion but of our oneness with him, so they can *see* as well as hear of his kingdom.

We could raise, by fasting and feeding, a sign that the preservation of our fleshly bodies is not our main concern. We wail about the "materialism" of our age, knowing full well that it is not the "age" but ourselves who are materialistic. Denying ourselves food for a time is a sign that our King has conquered our selves. It would clarify our vision, helping us to see things to which we are blinded by the folds of fat about our spiritual eyes. It would open our spiritual ears to what the Spirit says to the churches. It was only after the prophet Elijah fasted forty days in the wilderness that he could overcome his paranoid pessimism and hear the word that 7,000 in Israel had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19).

And fasting could become a sign of whose we are, an insignia of the army in which we march. It could become a sign to our own government that we oppose the fact that it spends \$50 for weapons to destroy life for every \$1 it spends on feeding the hungry. Refraining from consuming so many luxuries could be a sign to our consumeristic society that the world we ravage with our excessive appetites belongs to God. It is man's only as a steward, not a rapist; and the world's inhabitants need to see and hear a word from those who hear God's word about the world.

Fasting for famine relief also has the power to minister to the needs of the fasters. And let us not shun from confessing self-interest in acts of "charity." Failure to admit this dimension has cursed many "benevolent" programs with patronization and dehumanization. There is a healthy sense in which the Christian is "self-serving" when he serves others, for he is, in serving, acting after all in obedience and thus in his own best interest. Isaiah perceives this element clearly: feeding the hungry would solve some of Israel's problems as well. And he put his finger not only on the sins of Israel, but on the weak pulse of much American Christianity as well. While we cling to regular ritual, we seem to experience an erosion of zeal, a clouding of vision, a dullness of purpose. For all our feasting and fatness we hunger, for all our health we need healing. The prophet's prescription for this dis-ease is couched in terms of the fast: then shall *our* light break forth like the dawn, then shall *our* healing spring up speedily.

We Have Fasted, We Will Feast

As for that traditional Thanksgiving dinner, we will have one at our house as usual this year. It will be bountiful, though not extravagant. We will feast with joy, though perhaps unable to dismiss totally from our minds the plight of the hungry. We will approach the table remembering also our brief hunger during various fasting exercises during the past year. The community of faith in which we worship sought out a group skilled in famine relief and dedicated to the gospel, but also to agricultural reform and birth control efforts. To them we gave

our pittance—about a dollar for every meal foregone. Together with others in our community of faith we gave to stave off the black horse of famine for perhaps fifty people during the last several months.

Such pitifully small results would overwhelm us with despair if results alone were our motivation. We only trust that beyond results we can measure, our loaves and fishes will be multiplied by One who alone can transform them into the bread of life. And at least he has empowered us to raise a sign proclaiming that his greater nourishment is on the way.

MISSION

BEYOND DISILLUSIONMENT

A MEDITATION

By Wayne Anderson, Jr.*

Father, all my heroes are dead.

All my sword-bearing knights in shining armor are tarnished. All of the sound truth defenders have been perceived for what they are—fallible men of clay who break, bend, doubt, fuss, and are problemed like me. Lord, I've come of age and can no longer be content with dishonest, unstudied, unprayed, and faithless decisions and dogmatisms born of fearful fortress mentalities.

Father, Daddy's dead.

And I'm struggling under the weighty burden of freedom and responsibility. I'm seeking and learning too much to be comfortable with my legalistic brothers, my liberal brothers, and more especially with myself.

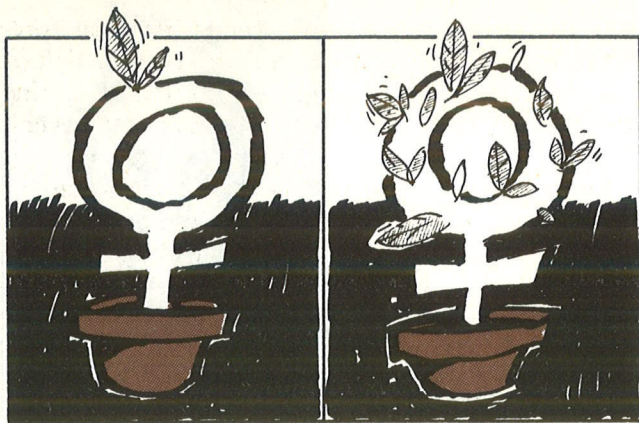
Give me a heart that will embrace all my brothers.
Cleanse and purify me in my quest for fuller faith.
Draw me in closer to the center of reality.
Keep me ever seeking your holy, truthful, loving face.

Father, I think I've seen my older brother.

And oh how I long to develop my identification with him, for he reveals and mediates you to me as only I am able to understand and receive you. Focus my eyes on Jesus' glorious beauty and help me to see myself and others through his eyes of love and grace.

Breathe into me your breath more fully,
That my high may be of your giving and not my
imaginative fantasy or rationalistic speculation.
O Spirit leader, fulfill the Father's purpose
in my life.
Keep me ever pointed toward Jesus.

*Former minister Wayne Anderson, Jr., was killed in an accident in Yosemite National Park last July.



FIRST OF TWO PARTS

CHURCH OF CHRIST WOMEN: UP FROM TRADITIONS OF MEN

BY MARY LOU WALDEN

All Works and no Grace makes Jill a dull pill! Churches of Christ are packed with Dull Jills and Plain Janes, women who until now, "the Year of the Woman," have been powerless to kick loose the cast-iron ball of childhood nurturing that chained us to pillars of Church of Christ culture. Here in the safety zone of propriety we have worked frantically for the Lord, baking and stitching for the poorly, educating tots in the ways of Baby Moses and the bulrushes and Noah and the ark, all the while submitting our lives to male, "heads" who have kept us in our place.

A heavy ball and chain, this Church of Christ culture. It has turned the strong among us into rebel-heretics, some of whom are learning to kick forcefully and intelligently. It has turned the weak into slaves to the false Christ of heritage, tradition, and sectarianism. It sent a lot in both camps to psychiatrists' couches, drove some underground, mesmerized the rest. Created a whole generation of repressed robots busy at "woman's work" for the Master. Obeying orders. Working at tasks we did not choose.

But Dull Jills blossom into Joyful Joans. The last year or so has been especially significant as these blooms have been watered and brought to flower. What has been the effect on us women who came of age in Texas, Tennessee, or kindred states where Church of Christ influence was strong? We are heirs to a tradition that has both blessed and cursed us. What that tradition is, what it has made of us, and what we are becoming are the three concerns of this two-part series.

What have we inherited?

If you grew up, as I did, in Middle Tennessee in the 1940s and '50s in a Church-of-Christ world, you know what a secure world it was. The Church of Christ was all we knew on earth and all we

needed to know. Global events scarcely touched us except in unavoidable ways like occasional city-wide blackouts or troop convoys that passed our houses in the early '40s. The war itself was across the ocean in foreign fields. Even in more peaceful times history-making events like the McCarthy trials and the execution of the Rosenbergs were virtually ignored in the culture in which we were educated. Churches of Christ and their schools had no atom bombs or "Communists" to reckon with, but only "the denominational world." We grew up safe, secure, and above all Sound. We knew that the Bible was the written word of God, that God's favorite institution was the Church of Christ, that righteousness and divine approval lay in strict obedience to what the Church of Christ publicly proclaimed. Nothing else mattered. Isolation and dullness engulfed us.

For a long time this church-culture influence seemed better felt than defined. For twenty-one years I lived in Nashville under the sheltering wing of the Church of Christ and David Lipscomb High School and College. They were good years and I would not for a moment repudiate this heritage; many of the blessings I enjoy today stem from it. But it was only after I moved to other parts of the country and later returned for visits that I became conscious of the "Nashville Feel," a sensation I felt immediately upon reaching city limits or stepping off the plane. Just a "something" in the air—intangible, invisible, but very real. Then, several years ago when I came upon Logan Fox's essay in *Voices of Concern* which verbalized the thing I had felt so often, I knew that it could indeed be defined:

What a place Nashville has in my heart! And how well Nashville represents some of the best and some of the worst elements of the Church of Christ. Ah Jerusalem, Jerusalem.

It is not easy to describe the power of Nashville. What a strange mixture of warm, southern hospitality and frightening capacity for revenge; of piety and senti-

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RUTH ELLENE GARATONI

mental devotion to the Bible coupled with shrewd, ruthless practicality; of fierce, almost paranoid certainty coupled with fearful rejection of all differing views as 'dangerous.' In few places is the church so dominated by a few men, yet as I seek now to understand how I was taught that the Church of Christ is the 'one and only true church' I find no particular name coming to mind. Rather does this central dogma of our brotherhood so thoroughly permeate the area that its source cannot be discovered . . . it is taken for granted and never questioned. One may play at being open-minded . . . but one never *really* questions whether we are in truth the true church. The few who seriously question are first laughed off, then gently warned, and finally ruthlessly cut off as dangerous and beyond hope.¹

This "Nashville Feel," with its power and influence, is not the peculiar property of Middle Tennesseans. Nashville, because of its more than 100 Churches of Christ plus the powerful influence of David Lipscomb College, is just a prototype of church culture, not an exclusive claimant. So, for this survey, I have talked with women from various parts of the country. The "Nashville Feel" is focused through different prisms, and becomes something different, yet something much the same. I sought to discover what kind of person has been molded out of this religio-cultural clay.

As Jane Howard wrote in the Introduction to *A Different Woman*, a delightful autobiographical portrait about the American woman's coming of age from the 1950s to the 1970s:

This book is, by design or deliberate lack thereof, more a patchwork quilt than a balanced, definitive survey. . . . A word about the pattern by which I proceeded: there wasn't one, so what I did was play it by ear.²

This survey, likewise, is sort of a patchwork quilt put together with the help of women—all of them with roots deep in Church of Christ culture—who were willing to talk about themselves and their heritage. I played it by ear as I urged them to talk. I tried to select women whose experiences made them representative of the great variety of women in the church. My only requirement was

that they be sensitive to the forces that had shaped their growth, and articulate enough to express their feelings.

Ruth Ellene Garatoni came to be my friend when she made the first of her many pilgrimages from Iowa to the Abilene Christian College lectures while her older daughter was a freshman in 1964-65. We met that year, and in subsequent years she stayed in my home at lectureship time. "Mama" Garatoni grew up in the Church of Christ in North Texas, attended ACC for a year, married Pete, a banker, and settled down in his hometown of Ft. Dodge, Iowa. They have three grown children, all of whom have attended ACC. When Ruth Ellene speaks about her Church of Christ background, she does so with enthusiasm and wisdom, careful to leave some questions open to further evaluation.

"I'm not sure it's Church of Christ background or just faith in God that I think are responsible for my real trust that all things will work out for the best, my joy in living, and my feeling of brotherhood with others in the church. But that background *is* responsible for my appreciation and knowledge of the Bible in greater amounts than my friends of other denominations, even though I sometimes have a hesitance to speak of Christ and God to ones I know need them. I guess that's sort of a complex from belonging to a group smaller and poorer and less educated than others in this area.

"On the negative side I think we have a feeling of superiority—of being the 'chosen ones,' of having *right* answers. I've also had to learn not to accept all scripture literally when a lot of it cannot be taken that way. Pete has sure helped me to see the fallacy of our thinking along this line—the way we're not really consistent. Maybe what I'm saying is that we have too often just accepted our forefather's beliefs about the Bible instead of trying to understand it ourselves. We're studying the book of Job in our class now and seeing in ourselves many of the same faults as Job's friends. . . . I have also

come to understand that we concentrate too much on legalism and church attendance and too little on love and consideration for others. I'll do some more thinking on this. . . ."

I always end my visits with Ruth Garatoni thinking, "Wow! I sure hope I can be as open minded as she when I grow up. She's lived for more than five decades, yet each year she gets smarter." I have a subjective hunch that she's like she is because she has lived most of her adult life in several cultures simultaneously—the Church of Christ culture she was born and bred in, the Italian-Catholic environment of her husband and his close-knit extended family, along with the general socio-economic culture of the Middle West. Always an open person, she has combined the best of all her several worlds while trying to walk hand-in-hand with God.

Coming to grips with Church of Christ culture has been difficult for "Jean," who lives "out West." For one thing, she's always lived in that western-Church of Christ culture; and when you're in that position, you have little basis for comparison. For another, she's just not given to off-the-cuff remarks and so had to think it through carefully before she could talk with ease. "A great resistance to introspection," she says she has!

"Because of my church background I have a rather strong strain of Puritanism in areas of ethics and moral values, and no lack of uneasiness toward 'pleasures of the flesh.' Not that I don't enjoy them or that I feel guilty about indulging—just more of an uneasiness about the worthy things I could be accomplishing instead. This gets worse as I get older, or maybe just since I went to work fulltime and have so little 'free' time.

"I find it almost impossible to find time for things I just want to do because of all the things I ought to do. This may be a personal hang-up, but I think it has roots in my religious upbringing both at church and at home. . . . I guess it's our legalistic system of rules-keeping, including the rule about women keeping silent and wives being in subjection, that conflicts with the freedom we are supposed to have in Christ. I think our expectations of happiness are quenched as we 'quench the spirit' by means of rigid interpretation of the chosen scriptures.

"I know," Jean went on, "that we are supposed to be 'free' and 'happy' as Christians, but does that mean in a secular sense or do these words have different connotations in the context of the church? Often it seems to mean 'free' to choose to

obey all the rules and 'happy' when I am able to obey at least some of them. Somehow that just doesn't fill the bill for me, yet it's right out of my religious heritage. . . . Is it consistent with one's Christianity to content oneself with moments of serendipitous happiness rather than to expect a lifetime of joyous living?" she concluded.

And one wonders about the answer, even those among us who think we've travelled some theological distance from "works" to "faith." We've planted our feet on higher ground, but footage on top is not always as comfortable as we'd like it to be.

Beth Johnson, whom I talked to next, is a good example. Now approaching 40, she has in recent years been blessed by a fellowship of people whose Christianity is as positive as that of the church of her youth was negative. She has no intellectual doubts about salvation by grace and faith, yet emotionally the legalism of childhood has left its scars.

I began by asking, "Tell me what you think Church of Christ culture is—socially, economically, spiritually—and how it has shaped your life?" That was a pretty large order to dole out, but Beth, whom I had known since high school, was all too eager to talk. I've always admired her spunk and wished I could swap some of my caution for it.

"Spiritually," Beth opined, "Church of Christ culture means that you are the 'chosen' people, really special and set apart from the denominations as equally as from the world. My view was that God really couldn't have cared less what was going on in any other church. It was all up to us. What a burden the Pine Ridge Church of Christ laid on me during those extra-tender teen years! I learned to be more committed to a way (the 'True Church') than to a person (Jesus), and more to a Book than to living that book's precepts. In all this mass of correct doctrine, I can't recall learning much about the nitty-gritty of dealing with other men as people made in God's image. And socially our culture means one big family, not unlike the Jewish tradition of looking out for each other and ostracizing the member who leans too far toward other groups—for example, dating a Catholic or marrying 'outside the church.'"

"Yes," but how has all this affected you personally?" I prodded. "After all, you didn't marry a heathen and you certainly love Jesus more than, say, the institutional church."

"Well, that's tough to answer because our mothers are the ones who have shaped us, and they're each different. But I'll try. I think I'm me today (i.e., able to move comfortably among Christians in other denominations) because my mother was fairly 'unchurchy' (though deeply Christian) until I was nearly grown. Her best

friends, and mine, too, during grade school, were Presbyterians, Methodists, and Catholic.

"I think one reason I've always been so against anti-denominational teaching is that I loved going with Daddy to the Presbyterian Church on rare occasions as a child. I loved the quiet and the music."

At this I had to smile irreverently as I recalled the time during her senior year in college when Beth developed a psychosomatic twitch while enrolled in a Bible class that required her to read a book on denominational errors. It wasn't at all funny at the time, but it served the useful purpose of teaching Beth something of the inner workings of the Church of Christ power structure when she protested the assignment. The mouse that roared, she was!

"Also," Beth continued thoughtfully, "my bosom pal during early adolescence was Methodist and I often participated in her church's social activities. Great fun! A far cry from solemn, dismal, Pine Ridge. I remember being torn.

"Yet I was burdened mainly with my daddy's lost soul. I dreamed of the end of the world—and him in hell! I would plan for hours how to approach him on the subject of baptism. But I never

could do it—and this struggle continued for three years. I don't think I'll ever be able to forget the terrible anxiety the well-meaning Church of Christ members burdened me with as a teenager. It was as if I alone were sending my daddy to hell. No wonder I have a spastic colon. Amazing it's not a spastic brain. A guilt-producing heritage like that is almost impossible to overcome; you just have to learn to live with it."

NOTES

¹Logan Fox, "Destiny or Disease?" in *Voices of Concern*, Robert Myers, ed. (St. Louis: Mission Messenger, 1966), p. 14.

²Jane Howard, *A Different Woman* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1973), p. 31. **MISSION**

Next month: concluding interviews dealing with the pain—and the glory—of the True Church heritage reveal that our patchwork quilt does indeed have an inviting, warming side.

THERE MUST BE TIMES OF QUIETUDE

There must be times of quietude
With minutes in golden strains
that weave a web sufficient strong
to trap the hours gained;

Or cells of solemn solitude
where minds lie on their back
and scan the hollow, layered sky
in search of birds and yaks;

Retreats within the wooded soul,
communions with our God,
arbors to replenish faith
and walk on calmer sod.

Valerie Collins

THE BOOK OF DAWN

By Jim Galuhn

DATE: 9/20/4574
TO: 692-2391, Hardin; & 692-2348, Young
FROM: 692-0700, Galuhn

It is unfortunate that I could not write the paper for your class. My Brain-wright machine is not functioning properly. However, I have translated a manuscript believed to be the oldest document of the ancient people of Church.

It is dated 2500 A.D.
It has to do with the assigned subject.
It is similar to the ancient documents of the other world found in what were once the poisoned ruins.
I think you will find it interesting.
Is it worth the effort I made?

Date: c. 2500 A.D. (Not long after the Great War.)
Author: Unknown.

Introduction

I will tell you a day. Now it is against civil law to tell a day because a day is only the boundary between one despair and another, according to civil law. But I appeal my case beyond civil law, and to the civil law I say: I will recount no despair to the people without speaking the lost word. For this is the good news to the people, the lost word is found, what was in darkness is now in light. And the lost word is mouthed among the people of

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Church. The light has come and revealed the lost word. And the word is Hope.

Chapter I

The Day is after the nights of the Great War. There was darkness on the land and among the people, and the sun was made to rise. Light from the horizon spilled onto the land and the people. On this day the light came to the people of Church. The light came to the people of Church, and they took it for a sign saying, "We see that we are the people of Church, but we have no words to say as a people. We have nothing as a people. We come from darkness."

The light began to warm the people of Church, and one among them rose to speak to the people of Church. This one was a Smuarian, that is, "One of great learning from the South." These are the words the Smuarian spoke to the people of Church:

"I am a Smuarian; I am old and have lived among us even before the Great War. I am one who remembers the days before the night of the Great War. I wish to speak to my people."

And the people listened to the Smuarian's words. "This day the people of Church are born again, for we have seen the light and felt its warmth, and we have seen that we are a people. It is not enough to be a people; even the Polics are a great people, those who make the civil law, but they are not a people of the lost word. We must be more than a people!" With these words the people were greatly troubled.

And the people call out, "How can we be more than a people?" This day we have seen the light as a people, we have discovered that we are born; now, as a people, we must discover why we are born." At this some scoffed. "God knows," they said, which is a way of saying that no one can know this, for God is a word that has no meaning among the people. Others called out, "We need a leader!" "Yes," some answered, "We need a Polic among our people to give us Laws."

But the Smuarian cried aloud and the people of Church heard him, "No! Not Polics!" And the people were quiet. "Laws we have, and they do not tell us why we are born. In the law there is not the lost word, for laws are to obey, they are not to believe. You will not discover why you were born from the law, and a Polic knows only the law." At this some were angry and afraid, "Will you destroy the law and the Polics?" they asked. "No," answered the Smuarian, "but we, the people of Church, will give meaning to the law and the Polics, that the law and the Polics might live in the light of the lost word with the people of Church."

Chapter II

Now the sun stood in the middle of the sky, the time when shadows vanish from the land, and the light warmed all the people of Church equally, without favor to him on the west or her on the east, nor giving favor to those who are wise, or

those who are foolish. And the people took it as a sign. And these are the words of the people: "Look, the light has warmed all of us without favor to one or disregard for another. Surely we are the people of Church, surely we are one people without one who is of greater worth than another."

"What we say is true," said the Smuarian, "but we must choose from among us those that would guide our search for the meaning of our birth as a people, so that we do not become a people lost in the wilderness, all going a different direction merely for the sake of the search and not for the sake of the people of Church." The people called to the Smuarian, "How shall this be? How shall we choose from among us guides without saying, 'This one is greater than others?'"

The Smuarian answered, "This is the way: all the people of Church will search for the meaning of our birth, but we will choose from among us Guides to the search. And the Guides shall not be greater than the people for the people shall choose their Guides and the Guides shall know that it is the people of Church who give them authority to be Guide. Know, therefore, that the Guides must act in the name of all the people of Church, and on their behalf.

"Now it is true that some will say that the search is here among you, the people of Church, and others will say the search is in the ruins and in the ancient Books of the people of Church; but this is a blessing. For some will find a meaning here among us, and others will find a meaning in the ancient ruins and Books, but all the people of Church will be blessed as we bring together our understanding on the Day of Light."

Then the Smuarian put a test to the people of Church saying, "How shall we choose? Shall we choose from those of learning, and those who desire to be a Guide; or shall we choose at random, and let the office of Guide grant the wisdom and vision that is needed?"

"There is no magic in the choosing," said the people, "nor magic in the office, and a Guide that

does not speak out of his learning either for the people or the lost word must no longer be a Guide." At this the people of Church showed great wisdom and courage.

Chapter III

Now the sun had moved to the west and the light came from the same direction as the flow of the water. And the people took it for a sign. "Look," said the people of Church, "the light flows in the direction of the water that is the life of the people of Church. Surely we are the people of Church, surely we are one people that receive life from the light as well as the water. Come, let us all drink of the water of Life as a people, the people of Church." And so the people drank the water of life together as one people. And it was a celebration.

Now the people of Church, who are one people, asked, "How shall we find meaning in our birth as a people, and how shall we remember this?"

The Smuarian answered, "Shall we not celebrate the Day of Light as it comes to the people of Church each week? Is this not the day when the people of Church were born again? And is this not the day that the people of Church became one people as they drank the water of Life together? And shall we not do so again on each Day of Light? Shall we not teach our children that they are present here on the Day of Light just as we are? And shall they not teach their children the same? For this is what we shall do: we shall give thanks for the Day of Light by reliving this day each week, and we, and our children, and our grandchildren shall remember."

Chapter IV

So the people of Church, who are one people, chose Guides from the most learned among them; men and women, young and old, they chose and ordained them as Guide in the search for meaning

and as celebrants in the rite of thanksgiving and remembrance with these words:

"You who are ordained Guide among the people of Church must search your lives to know and deliver to the people of Church the meaning and sacred remembrances of our life together. You must speak the lost word to the people that they might speak the lost word to the world, for we are all one people and we are all searchers. The people of Church give you authority to:

"Guide our search for meaning, celebrate our remembrances with us, continue to question the meanings of the people and those of other Guides, and to speak the meanings which are on the very hearts of the people. This shall you do on behalf of all the people of Church."

Chapter V

Now the sun had moved far to the west and was almost gone when the Smuarian died. The people of Church mourned his death and thought to bury him near the water of Life. The Guides carried his body and buried him near the water and the people of Church passed by the site, each leaving a drop of water on the grave that life may spring up from death.

Chapter VI

Now the sun was gone. And the people of Church took it as a sign. "Look," they said, "the sun and all its light is gone even as the Smuarian is gone. Surely we are the people of Church, surely we are one people who will find meaning and remembrances. Surely we have found through the Smuarian the lost word. Surely the word is Hope."

And the people of Church ate bread together as one people saying the lost word for the rise of the sun tomorrow. And because they spoke the lost word for a new day, they knew the meaning of the word. And the Guides would help the people of Church to understand the word and put the word into the life of the people of Church. And the word is Hope.

MISSION



BETTER THAN BLUE CROSS ANY DAY

BY NEIL GALLAGHER

A fellow Peace Corps Volunteer, Don Sjostrom, once told me that while hitch-hiking through Afghanistan he collapsed with fever in the desert. Alone, sick, and desperately needing another human being, he found one. A smelly goat-herdsman dragged him to his hut and through six, unsteady days nursed him to health with only warm broth and a sleepless vigil.

Don's experience reminds me that, in or out of Afghanistan deserts, we desperately need *unconditional care*. Sometimes our desperation is sensorially apparent, as in Don's case. But, largely, the need is a daily, undramatic, slumbering ache. Per-

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sons ache for other persons: we ache to be assured that other persons care for us, just as we are. Only people, *individual* people one-at-a-time, heal, comfort and encourage. Mammoth institutions never do. We only think they do.

Don's experience reminds me that whether people share family, friends, government or language, is irrelevant to compassion. The touchstone of compassion, you see, lies not in common genes or common culture but in sensitivity to human worth: one individual responding to the human worth of another individual. And sensitivity to human worth arises because of a divine spark in each of us. We are constructed to have compassion ignited in us when another cries in desperate need. Unless . . . *unless we have been programmed to entrust our needs to institutions, not individuals*. I think that's what we've done in America.

We Americans do not admit our desperate needs. Tragic, because where no need is admitted, no compassion can be ignited. Compassion is provoked by need. No need, no compassion. Don's need provoked a goat-herdsman's compassion. And Don's experience urgently screams in America. Our hearts need to be ignited.

We have been programmed to believe that institutions of big insurance, big medicine and big government fill our needs. We have stumbled, therefore, into the deceptive trap of believing that we do not desperately need others. And having denied our need for individuals, we have denied others opportunities to have their compassion ignited. Because we think we have our needs filled by institutions (hence we refuse to display our need for individuals), we have repeatedly robbed *ourselves* of opportunities to have compassion ignited. The result: our capacity to feel compassion has shrunk because (as with anything else), without the frequent practice, the capacity shrinks. A grapefruit-size bicep lying motionless and unstimulated for six months shrinks to a walnut. And it's true with the human soul.

Here's what has happened in our fiercely independent America. We have become ashamed to admit helplessness and have denied our divine urge to *give* and *get* gratuitous help. We have successfully smothered our aching, desperate needs. Displaying no needs, we have cut off opportunities for others to help us. We've hurt us, we've hurt them. Smothering our needs has not comforted us. Despite the specious shelter of mammoth institutions "guaranteeing" health, happiness, and security, we are insecure, lonely, and most unhappy. Frightened by our dependence on institutions and estrangement from individuals, we are increasingly filled with fear. We have become people who are *always* afraid.

We are afraid because fellowmen have become intruders we fear and not friends we trust. We are afraid because our mounting distrust of individuals forces us to abdicate more trust to institutions—the very thing we loathe. We are afraid because although we pay, pay, pay institutions to guarantee security, we do not feel secure.

We are afraid because we can't seem to stop the erecting of higher, thicker walls of anonymity and alienation. We are afraid because we sense that to individuals, the only sources of divine compassion and our security, we pay less and less attention. We are afraid because the trust and security we ache to share with individuals has become a childish ideal. We are, in sum, afraid because we have abdicated to impersonal, fragile institutions the security we want to entrust to involved, faithful individuals. We do not want Blue Cross, after all. We want brothers.

And we are worried. We are worried because institutions *we* created to expedite the aid of individuals have become cold mercenaries merely substituting for individual neglect. (We don't trust our neighbor to care for us, so we pay, big government to legislate bigger programs to care for us.) We are worried because institutions *we* created to funnel individual sympathies have become citadels to shield us from individual assault. We are worried because within us smolders a suspicion that the security we snatch from institutions *never* will replace the security we covet in individuals. We are worried because we know much too well that true insecurity grips us *not* when institutions fail but when individual compassion dries up. And ours, we suspect, is drying up. No one's admitting his desperate needs any more and no one's being stirred to compassion.

**"We do not want Blue Cross,
after all. We want brothers."**

We hate our insecurity. Daily convinced that in individuals, not institutions, we must deposit our security, we yearn to believe that strangers *do* weep our tragedies and nurse our wounds. We want to believe that more good Samaritans abound than hurried, frozen-hearted Levites. We want to believe that members of our institutional society live above jungle law of animal pouncing on helpless animal. When we see those beliefs mocked, institutions give no comfort and life is hell.

Our insecurity increasingly terrorizes as we find ourselves embracing the attitude that it's not only possible to live isolated from individuals but *desirable*. (God and men, forgive us!) Having so long

**"... security-in-institutions is a
womb from which we find
it painful to be wrenched."**

entrusted ourselves to institutions, we have blinded ourselves to the primacy of the individual. Having forgotten our desperate need for individuals, we have slipped into the specious confidence that we are self-sufficient. Ironically, while we deny our desperate need for individuals, we increasingly hire the mercenaries of government and insurance to succor in suffering and tragedy. But they do not comfort.

Grudgingly, we Americans have learned that security does not lie at the bottom of an institutional grab-bag of pensions but at the bottom of hearts, hearts of individuals *through whom God heals*. This is a hard lesson because security-in-institutions is a womb from which we find it painful to be wrenched.

Security-in-institutions has deceived us. And, it has chilled our feelings for individuals. Witnessing another's pains, we sometimes sigh, "That's the way things are," while we ought to scream, "He needs *my* help!" We don't scream the latter because, having been programmed to believe that institutions supply every need of every individual, we concede that individuals do not want—or need—other individuals. Occasionally, we will admit we need individuals *instrumentally*. We need them to keep computers running, stamp digits on paychecks, and deliver hospital trays. We gradually and confidently conclude that as long as we pay, pay, pay individuals we force them to be our instrumental servants. We forget our aching desire is for individuals caring for us regardless of institutional duty or pay.

Because of the deception of security-in-institutions, Americans have insulated their emotions to avoid "feeling" for others. Believing that institutional care has obviated the need for individual care, we've become isolated from each other. During sensitive moments, burdened with our isolation, we really fear we have fulfilled John Stuart Mill's prophecy that institutions like ours would breed people "... who think that the normal state of human beings is that of struggling to get on: that the trampling, crushing, elbowing, and treading on each other's heels ... are the most desirable lot of human kind. ..." Buying more insurance and screaming for fatter pensions have programmed us to ignore our isolation. We need to learn that isolation is dispelled not by ignoring it but by opening up to others, unconditionally.

Having abdicated to institutions the responsibility to protect the trampled and crushed, we have concluded that if the institutions fail to protect, that's tough for the trampled. We have reasoned that it is not the responsibility of individuals to comfort the crushed because that is *precisely what we pay our institutions to do*. We intuitively sense the brutality of our conclusions, however, and periodically admit that security-in-institutions fails. Sensing the failure of institutions, we've become depressed and suppress it by quaffing more uppers. We've become alienated and deny it by befriending comedians of an impersonal tube. We have learned to cuddle objects of wood and stone and plastic, yearning for a true embrace with bodies of flesh and blood and life. For joy and comfort we stuff our bodies with beer, beef, and pastries, forgetting that true joy abounds in using our bodies as channels of God's compassion.

Having been weaned on absolute and unquestioned confidence in institutions, we have swallowed many fictions about individual needs—including the fiction that the institution of modern medicine heals all discomfort and guarantees recovery. We nearly have discarded the place of the individual in the healing process and nearly ignored the relentless fact that medicine cannot revive and restore a person lacking life-passion. And we have forgotten that life-passion pounds only in those

At times of hospital recovery, every man discovers that security-in-institutions is a mockery. No matter how much we pay institutions, they cannot sponge beads of sweat from a hot forehead, stroke a twisted and blanched arthritic hand, cheer up a moody spirit or pray for a soul locked in fright. And eventually, everyone (not just hospital patients) senses that the longer we embrace security-in-institutions, the faster we really provoke "every man-for-himself." (As we've discovered that security-in-institutions is a failure, we have increasingly turned with fanaticism to a defense of our own interests. We've forgotten there's a third alternative.)

And "every man-for-himself" plunges us deeper into despair. In reflective moments, we fear we've fulfilled Joyce Oates' description: "I firmly believe that mankind is so instinctively, unconsciously involved with the survival and growth of the species that when an individual attempts to live selfishly, he will fail or fall into despair" ("The Unique/Universal in Fiction," in *The Writer*, January, 1973.)

Because of our dependence on institutions and neglect of individuals, we have been a generation of despair. Having witnessed the impotence of institutions to stop wolves from preying on the weak and lonely, we painfully have sensed our desperate

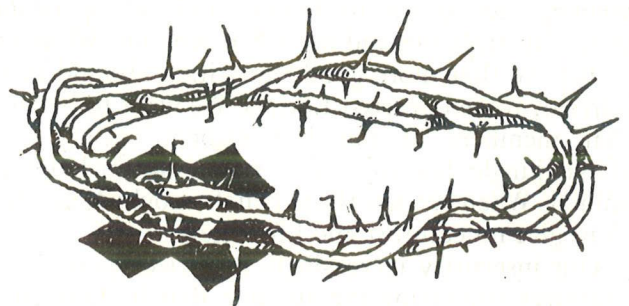
"... our primitive need is not for hospitalization but compassion,
not pensions, but people, not for institutions but individuals.

who believe their world is peopled by individuals in whom divine warmth glows. We have forgotten that under strain of recovery, life-passion limps in one witnessing a world of hurried animals who ignore his demise or are eager to rummage his remains.

Physicians daily witness that the will to live, gushing from a belief that something is worth living for, triumphs where medicine often fails. But the reverse is never true: medicine cannot rejuvenate an individual lacking life-passion. I respect the power of medicine to relieve suffering, but I know men fear a suffering deeper than skin. I know that patients viewing a brutal, impersonal world have a monstrous disadvantage in recovery. They daily discover that, during recovery, more important than doctors, nurses, medicine and Blue Cross is an individual who loves you, aches with you, and would cry if you died. They learn that life glows with value only when one individual aches over another's loss and pain, no strings attached. They acutely feel that humans are love-hungry and love-sharing creatures whose hunger and sharing *must be satisfied* else grief and death prevail.

need for individuals: involved, committed, and unselfish individuals. Because of what we have witnessed, we may dethrone institutions and open up to individuals. And, hopefully, burned in the center of our brains will be the lesson that our primitive need is not for hospitalization but compassion, not pensions, but people, not for institutions but individuals. I believe that if we admit our desperate need for each other and display it, we will ignite compassion in each other and we will be the happiest people in the world.

MEXON



NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION: PROBLEM & PROBE

PART I

BY BOB BURGESS

The main problem in the Church of Christ today involves the proper method of interpreting the New Testament. As the title of this article implies, the following discussion will consist of two main divisions. The first will present the problem of the interpretive method used by that portion of the Restoration Movement which emphasizes doctrinal purity over unity. This will necessarily involve some negative criticism, but only for the purpose of allowing the reader to understand why I feel there is a need for an alternate way of opening up the New Testament for the church today. The presentation of the problem of our method of interpreting the New Testament will include a discussion of what I mean by interpretation and "our method" of New Testament interpretation. The problem will also include a discussion of the relationship between tradition and interpretation and then close with a discussion about the adequacy of our method.

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The second part of this study will probe or explore an alternate way of applying the New Testament teachings to our lives today. As the reader will see, much of our traditional method will be incorporated. The Church of Christ finds itself today in a very unstable world with conditions changing rapidly. The tendency of some brethren seems to be to fear the changes and to react in a way which would make the church take an isolationist position. On the other hand, some brethren clamor so loudly for freedom to experiment in this changing world that Christian commitment exists only in rhetoric. The task of the probe will be to lead us to think together about a method of interpreting the New Testament that will enable the church to live realistically in this world without compromising its character as Christian.

WHAT IS INTERPRETATION?

The meaning of interpretation (or "hermeneutics") can be understood best by contrasting it with exegesis. Exegesis refers to the process of establishing the meaning of a New Testament text as it was originally intended. For example, when Paul used the word "flesh" in Galatians 5:19, what did

"The Church of Christ cannot escape wrestling with the problem of how much tradition of men has penetrated our method of interpretation."

he mean? When we think of "flesh" we naturally think first of physical bodies; however, an exegete must lay aside modern meanings as much as possible if he is to understand what *Paul* understood "flesh" to mean. The exegete researches how Paul used "flesh" in all his writings to see if a pattern emerges. Paul used "flesh" to refer to that part of man which is self-centered and fails to respond to God. Very seldom does Paul refer to the physical body when talking about the "flesh."

After finding out what the text really said, inasmuch as that is possible to determine, the interpreter steps in. The task of interpretation is to take the original meaning of the text and make the "practical application" for today. So for Galatians 5:19, the listed vices arise out of that part of man which fails to respond to God—his defective will. This is a valuable corrective for many churchmen who feel that the physical body itself is evil or at best neutral and is the source of sin. This means that our physical bodies and their desires are to be enjoyed in our relation to God as much as doing good works. The responsibility God enjoins upon us is to make the right choices in what we do with our God-given desires. This will be done to the extent that our wills are responsive to God—not by believing that our bodies and our desires are evil and must be defused. In brief then, exegesis refers to what the text *meant*, while interpretation refers to what it *means*.

Our Method of Interpretation

"Our method" of interpreting the New Testament is obviously too complex to discuss in detail, but it is generally recognized that most members of the Church of Christ are committed to restoring the practices of the apostolic church in regard to worship, use of the church treasury, plan of salvation, church organization, etc., because we feel that the apostolic church pleased God more than any other. To do this, it has been acknowledged that we must obey the commands of the apostles and their examples in the matters just cited. Necessary inferences must also be made at times. By following the command-example-inference method of interpreting the New Testament we shall restore the purity of the apostolic church and be as pleas-

ing to God as that ancient church. In this paper "our method" refers to the command-example-inference approach to establish the apostolic church in its purity today.

Scripture and Tradition

Our method of interpreting the New Testament is a product of tradition. To say that something is traditional is not to say that it is inferior or sinful, since tradition in and of itself can be either good or bad. Nevertheless each generation must weigh the traditional concepts it inherits from past generations, utilizing the good and discarding the unusable aspects of tradition.

The New Testament and Tradition

Scripture and tradition interpenetrate each other so thoroughly that the two can be readily confused. The New Testament itself contains tradition and tradition quotes the New Testament. Religious men elevate their tradition to Scripture and humanists reduce the New Testament to tradition. The Church of Christ cannot escape wrestling with the problem of how much the tradition of men has penetrated our method of interpretation. Historically the church has always had this problem, and it is instructive to take a look at this from a historical vantage point.

The first great battle the church fought against a rival was that against gnosticism. Gnostics held that they had received the secret teachings of Jesus during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension. The church countered gnostic teaching by establishing a doctrine of Scripture. The New Testament canon was fixed to overcome the threat of the secret traditions of the gnostics. The gnostics, however, also used the New Testament, and here the battle was joined. Who had the authority to interpret the New Testament?

The gnostics claimed the authority to interpret the New Testament on the basis of secret traditions. The church claimed the authority to interpret the New Testament because it possessed the tradition which could be traced back to the apostles themselves. The apostolic tradition was the official key to interpret the New Testament. But

the very same key that the church used against the gnostics became its own stumbling block. No longer was the New Testament alone decisive for the church. The decisive factor became the tradition which controlled the interpretation of the New Testament.

Later, the Roman Catholic Church officially recognized tradition as having equal authority with Scripture. When the question of who interpreted Scripture arose, it was the Holy Mother Church that gave the interpretation. In Protestantism the theological faculties were entrusted to interpret Scripture, but these theological faculties held widely divergent opinions from each other. Nevertheless, the problem is clear. Interpretation is, to some extent at least, controlled by the tradition the interpreter brings to the text. Confessions, creeds, and encyclicals become decisive for biblical interpretation. The New Testament is seldom allowed to speak for itself in many areas where men seek its guidance. On the other hand it proclaims its own message so powerfully in many areas that not even the most dogmatic of churches and men can obscure it.

PROBLEMS IN OUR METHOD

The Church of Christ has considered itself neither Catholic nor Protestant. No formal written creed is taught by catechism or repeated in the worship. This only makes it harder for some of us to see that we have our equivalent to the oral traditions of ancient societies. Nowhere in Scripture

"There is no evidence that a church treasury existed in apostolic times."

does it say that the church should use the command-example-inference method of interpreting Scripture. Such a method is of men and hence there is a responsibility to question and reshape it if necessary. While the command-example-inference method of interpreting the New Testament has much to commend it, there are areas where it is inadequate. The inadequacies as I see them shall now be discussed in order to try to show the need for an alternate method of interpretation.

Exegesis Slighted

First, our method of interpretation sometimes overpowers exegesis. An example of this is our interpretation of 1 Corinthians 16:2, "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside (*par beauto*) and store it up, as he may

prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come." This verse has been the proof-text used to support the practice of contributing into the church treasury every first day of the week. The truth is that this verse has been taken out of context before exegesis has been done. The translation of *par beauto* as to put something "*aside* (literally *by him*)" is to imply that contributing should be done at home rather than the assembly.¹

There is no evidence that a church treasury existed in apostolic times,² nor is there any evidence that the laying aside in each individual home had anything to do with a Sunday assembly.³ Further biblical support may be found in Galatians 6:6 where Paul commanded that individuals ("him who is taught") share their material gifts with the one who teaches. The teacher was not paid through a treasury because none existed. The first mention of a formal church treasury is in Justin Martyr's *Apology*, about 150 A.D.

Two points must be noted here. First, it has been assumed that the apostolic church handled their financial affairs like modern churches. Therefore, most Restorationists have not perceived that something very different was meant in 1 Corinthians 16:2 from what has become the accepted meaning. In brief, we have read our twentieth century practice back into the New Testament.

Second, this passage is one of the proof-texts for the pattern of worship—something, we have felt, that is essential to restore. We have felt that the treasury is so important that we have debated its uses through the decades. So when Paul commanded (*diataxe*) individuals to lay by in store at home (1 Cor. 16:2) or individuals to support teachers (Gal. 6:6), then we in the twentieth century are not adhering to the pattern of the apostolic command in an area that we hold as vital—not just important. We may rationalize setting aside Paul's commands about the holy kiss (Rom. 16:16) or wearing the vail (1 Cor. 11:2-16) or foot washing (1 Tim. 5:10) as being part of first century culture and therefore not binding today. But, given our quest for the pattern of worship and all of our past debates over how the treasury can be used, the discrepancy between modern practice and the apostolic command regarding the collection cannot be so lightly dismissed. Either we should conform to Paul or further narrow what we think is necessary to restore.

Differences Overlooked

A second difficulty is that our method does not recognize differences in practices among the New Testament churches. Surely the different congregations of the New Testament period had many similarities. Whether at Rome, Jerusalem, or Ephesus,

congregations worshiped, baptized converts, etc. On the other hand there were pronounced differences among churches made up of Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians, Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, and Christians who were Gentile. This is apparent on looking at the book of Acts. In chapters 1-5 the preaching of Peter, John, and the other apostles was the cause of strong opposition from the Jews almost from the beginning. Peter and John were arrested twice. The second time that they went before the council, Gamaliel offered the advice to let them be—if their work were of men it would come to nothing, and if it were of God the Jews would be guilty of opposing God. The council beat Peter and John before letting them go, but Peter and John were allowed to preach despite the warnings or at least they did so (Acts 5:42). So it seems that the Jews and the Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians led by Peter and John lived in an uneasy truce with the Jews. They were able to come to terms.

In Acts 6-8:3 the story turns to the group of which Stephen is a leader—the Greek-speaking Jewish Christians. In Acts 6:11ff., Stephen was accused of speaking against the Temple and the Law and saying that Jesus would destroy the Temple and the customs of Moses. No doubt the Jews exaggerated the charges against Stephen, but there was a kernel of truth there. In Stephen's defense (or offense) he emphasized the role of the Tabernacle over the Temple. He emphasized God's presence in Mesopotamia, not merely Jerusalem or the promised land. The covenant of circumcision was

persecution, not that wing of the church led by Peter. The apostles stayed in Jerusalem during the persecution (8:14). Peter's group was tolerated by the Jews after the initial friction. Stephen's group sharpened the differences between the church and the Jews so much that these could not be tolerated.

What does all this have to say about our method of interpretation? We are seeking to establish the New Testament pattern of the apostolic church, but not all congregations were the same. The same Jews drove some Christians out of the city and left other Christians alone. So now a question must be raised. Which church shall we restore—Peter's or Stephens? The answer is that both churches were loved and nourished by Christ and both were his despite the differences. Christ saw these congregations as part of his church despite their differences. To my way of thinking, however, this does not remove the fact that there were differences, nor the question of which one of these churches we should emulate.

Before beginning the probe for a method for interpreting the New Testament that is felt to be more responsive to historical reality, let us repeat our point about tradition. All churches have them. No organization, secular or religious, can maintain its own identity without tradition. But traditions are of mixed value—some are true, some false; some good, some evil. Tradition is not without value, but it must be sifted, and tested by Scripture.

"Christ saw these congregations as part of his church despite their differences."

not exclusively a Mosaic "custom," but predated Moses. Abraham was given the covenant of circumcision as the one who was to be a father of many nations (Gen. 17:5), not just a Jewish nation.

So there was a contrast between Peter and Stephen. Peter preached that Jesus was the Christ. Stephen preached this, too, but he also soft-pedaled much of what the Jews considered sacred. For example, Peter continued to worship at the Temple, but Stephen elevated the Tabernacle as the place of God's witness instead of the Temple (7:44-50). There were other differences in thinking between the Aramaic-speaking Jewish church and the Greek-speaking church, and the Jews themselves understood these differences to be significant. It was the Greek-speaking Jewish church led by Stephen that was driven out of Jerusalem by

In a word tradition represents the worldliness of the church; Scripture points to its supernatural origin and basis. All Christians have much to learn from the past, but it is their perpetual obligation to bring their inherited customs, institutions and traditions to the bar of Scripture, by which Christ rules in his church.⁴

NOTES

¹ K. Nichle, *The Collection* (London: ACM Press, 1966), p. 15.

² C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 387. Also see commentaries by Robertson-Plummer, Grosheide and Lenski.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ C. K. Barrett, T. E. Jesop, T. D. Meadley and N. H. Snaith, *Conversations Between the Church of England and the Methodist Church* (London: 1963), part II, ch. 2, pp. 15 ff.

LOOKING OUT

Schools Teaching "Secularist Creed"?--A taxpayers group has filed suit in St. Louis County Court claiming that public schools teach "secularism" as a religious creed, violating the First Amendment. The suit could affect the taxing authority of public schools in Missouri, since a taxpayer may demand that his taxes be withheld from any illegal undertaking.

Religion in China--An evangelical conference called "Love China '75" has been warned that a probable invitation to visit China would be "purely political." David Aikman, Hong Kong correspondent for Time magazine, said that while the invitation would be extended to improve China's overseas image, most such visits were followed by severe actions against Christian groups in China....A West German authority on China has cautioned Christians against becoming so "fascinated by China" that they consider the Maoist regime to be the Kingdom of God on earth.

Jewish-Christian Peace Gestures--The famous Passion Play performed annually at Easter in Oberammergau, Germany, has been revised in response to charges it was anti-Semitic. Revised wording will fix blame for the Crucifixion on the fallen angel of evil, rather than on the Jews....And the Interfaith Committee of Israel will present Pope Paul VI a Jewish "shofar," the biblical ram's horn blown on Jewish holy days, in recognition of Paul's efforts at "peace and reconciliation" during the Roman Catholic Jubilee Year of 1975.

"Narnia" to Be Televised--C. S. Lewis' children's classic, Chronicles of Narnia, will be made into a series of animated television programs. A \$100,000 grant from the Lilly foundation will help the Episcopal Radio-TV foundation produce the series.

Beware of Fundamentalists--A Jesuit speaker at a Catholic charismatic conference has warned that fundamentalists are preoccupied with the demonic, and with legalistic Bible interpretation. They are too often "filled with anger, fire, and brimstone," he said. The statement underscored developing differences among charismatics, many of whom are fundamentalists.

Interim Church Planned--"Moderates" in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod have invited congregations to affiliate with the Lutheran Church in Mission if a split occurs in the Missouri Synod. Although unwilling now to declare a formal schism, the "moderates" are operating under the assumption that a split is unavoidable.

FORUM

Here by Choice

Having been reared in the "Disciples of Christ," *Mission* is like old home week to me. May I make some observations?

Many of us are where we are by choice, since we had alternatives. When I no longer believed the basic philosophy of the Disciples, I left. No one treated me unkindly or was unappreciative of my genius. It was an intellectual, not an emotional decision.

Why all the heart-rending melodrama about restructuring the church, when so many of us peasants are quite happy in our bondage? It seems to me the Disciples are the logical fulfillment of the direction many of *Mission's* writers wish to take us.

Those who try to become saviors of the church frighten me to the depths. However, I have confidence that the church will survive the Ira Rice, Jr.'s and the Gary Freemans.

NEIL CLARK, Minister
Church of Christ
Pullman, Washington

Do Liberals And Conservatives Need Each Other?

The new editor of *Mission* says "I conclude, therefore, that the cliché that 'liberals and conservatives need each other' applies among restoration heirs". . . . (July, 1975, p. 4).

I realize that some who are characterized as liberals are saying some things that some who are characterized as conservatives really need to hear. I would include among these an encouragement to confront our national, "respectable" sins of racial prejudice or respect of persons, and pride and greed and materialistic orientation. I would also include a renewed emphasis on freedom in Christ, on grace, on Christian security and peace, and on love as the center of the New Testament way of life.

However, I must insist that these emphases are all themselves New Testament emphases. A neglect or denial of them is a neglect or denial of New Testament authority and, therefore, of the true "conservative" stance. I deny that the "liberals" have anything truly worthwhile to offer even here, for two basic reasons.

One, they ensure by their approach that their message will not be heard by those they want to convert. If they want to reach those committed to biblical authority with these emphases, let them show that they, too, are committed to the authority of the Bible and these are biblical themes. Then biblically committed people will listen. Today's "liberals," however, choose to attack the Bible as our pattern or authority. It does not matter, they say, what the Bible teaches about women leading and teaching men, about music in worship, about church organization. Thus they shut our ears to them before we hear whatever they have that is worthwhile.

Secondly, and more tragically, their lack of commitment to all that the Bible says undercuts their message at its own roots. If Christ is not Lord of

all, why believe he is Lord at all? If what the Bible says about women teaching, for example, does not matter, why does what it says about love matter? As a matter of fact, it doesn't! Even on the themes they emphasize, they ignore much of the biblical content. They would separate grace from obedient faith; they would offer security to the impenitent disobedient; they remove from love its biblical content of law. (On this last point see Romans 13:8-10; John 14:15.)

Everything worthwhile that a "liberal" has to offer comes from the areas where he is not liberal, but has stayed true to the Word. Liberals only offer one thing, really, from their liberalism, and that is encouragement to each one to do his own thing, go his own way, rather than do God's thing and go God's way as revealed in the Scriptures. And we do not need that, precisely because we already have too much of it in every camp.

CECIL MAY, JR.
Vicksburg, Mississippi

'It Touched My Life'

When I read of Phillip Roseberry's death, I cried. Never having met him personally, his article "A Skinny White Christian Moves to the Ghetto" (June '75) touched my life. Being an overweight white Christian who has always lived in the suburbs, has caused me to stop and to do some re-examining.

Because of my lack of faith, I couldn't help asking God, "Why???" After some prayer and study of the Word, I've concluded that the same God who allowed his only begotten Son to be executed as a common criminal is still allowing men the freedom of their own will. It's still the same Lord who allowed his apostles,

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← CROSS CURRENTS →

ON BEING BARRED FROM THE PROMISED LAND

"Tragic" has been the word most often used to describe the recent events involving Pepperdine University's Chancellor M. Norvel Young, one of the most widely influential leaders in the Churches of Christ. It is perhaps a fitting enough word in many ways. The September accident in which two died and Young was charged with manslaughter and drunken driving was certainly of tragic proportions. For Pepperdine supporters, the accident's timing could hardly have been worse, coming as it did on the heels of months of controversy over the administration's fiscal policies. There was the added tragedy that math professor Charles Wilks was killed in a campus motorcycle wreck a day before Young's accident. And there was the irony of Young's absence as thousands assembled on the Pepperdine Malibu campus for a special program featuring none other than President Ford. While others celebrated new gains, dedicated new facilities, and congratulated Pepperdine President Bill Banowsky, Young said from his hospital bed that he felt like Moses, who led Israel to the promised land only to be unable to enter it himself.

How does a church react when one of its heroes comes under such accusations? A few detractors always cry "I told you so!" but such responses speak more of the smallness of the detractor than of the facts of the case. At the other extreme are those who are so quick to excuse, soothe, and smooth that they could not hear it if guilt were admitted—thus denying the offender the experience of radical forgiveness and release. Still others of us tend to deny that such charges could possibly have a foundation in fact. "Not in our church!" we may sputter.

But there is hope for nobler reactions. And in that hope lies the possibility that in the context of the church the word "tragic" is never an ultimately adequate description of such events. While we await the facts of the case and the official pleas to be entered, we would do well to gauge our own

capacity to deal with such situations.

It is in church where we do not have to deny the facts—either about ourselves or others. We have yet to see how Young's attorneys will deal with published blood test results which officials say substantiate their charges. If they are admitted, we will be called to provide another, more grace-full context for confession than the public courts. That setting, of course, is the community of fellow-pilgrims who know our needs and who can say the Word of good news that alone overwhelms overwhelming tragedy. When these our brothers and sisters neither deny facts nor withhold gracefulness, church is happening among us.

The "Ah-ha, I told you so" response is hardly worth condemning. It is best said by those who have not been tested to the extent of the brother or sister they judge. It is most frequently voiced by those who have never really faced up to their own guilt and personal need for the Body's forgiveness. When those who might otherwise make this response consider themselves, lest they also be tempted, church can happen among us.

And it is the possibility of church happening that prevents the word "tragic" from being the very last word. The loved ones of those killed in the accident being investigated at this writing can be surrounded by a community which insists that tragedy is not the ultimate force at work in the world. Those who stand with Young and the university are assured that where church happens neither judgment nor despair is the finally appropriate verdict.

It is a tragedy that the innocent are killed and that events bar leaders from their promised lands. But where church can still happen this judgment is only penultimate. Where church happens the merely-mortal status of leaders can be openly confessed, the Body can dispatch the Blood to the wound in a healing stream, and surely the Land can yet be entered on another Day.

—RD

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(s) Ron Durham

FORUM *Continued from Page 22*

who were specially chosen, to be stoned, beaten, shipwrecked, and executed at the hands of pagans. And, this occurred while they were doing God's will!

So much of what my Church of Christ background has given me is so totally irrelevant for what I need to grow and mature as a member of the body of Christ. I'm a third year law student, and I am at a point in my life where I am trying to make some conscious decisions concerning my role in the kingdom of God. *Mission* has been a real blessing in my life, as it has helped to fill a void by at least allowing servants like Phillip Roseberry to share his life in Christ in print, to help inspire those of us who are weak.

I've heard Sunday school teachers toss around the old saying—how the roots of the early church were watered by the blood of the martyrs—for years; but not till recently have I just begun to understand the depths of the commitment that "Jesus is Lord."

BRAD STEVENS
St. Louis, Missouri

We Are Listening

I wanted to offer my encouragement and to let you know that you are being listened to. Too often we owe debts that are never acknowledged. Your editorial, "Clothes for the Body" (July '75), seemed to me to be an excellent statement of the way we ought to see ourselves as a brotherhood. I have for a long time felt torn between the security of sectarian identity and the reality of the swing toward socially acceptable denominational status.

Apathy is the final result of that kind of tension. You have articulated a position that needs to be restated over and over. It seems to me that it is at the heart of our tradition and may well be the major contribution our tradition has to make to contemporary Christian thought.

ROBERT M. RANDOLPH
Wellesley, Mass.

New Directions

I was impressed with the articles in the July issue reflecting on the change in editors and dealing with the matter of new directions. May I make some observations of my own? Some observers have suggested that *Mission* was and has been simply a product of the times. Undoubtedly the journal has served as one of the few avenues through which dissenting opinion could be expressed. Most individuals, however, who have struggled with the issues expressed in *Mission* eventually want a faith born not so much out of dissent, dissatisfaction and cynicism, as out of positive truth.

Mission has, in years past, courageously filled a need, but I sense a need (and others seem to share this, judging from recent articles and letters in *Mission*) for *Mission* to set some new directions. If, in the journal's own words, "communicating the meaning of God's word to our contemporary world," is one continuing purpose of *Mission*, there seems to be a continual need to be sensitive to what that world is saying—and asking.

It is my feeling that *Mission* needs to become more practical. Being prac-

tical is not being unscholarly. If I understand the new thrusts announced by the new editor-in-chief ("Clothes for the Body: A Journal's Agenda," July, 1975), I am grateful for these new interpretations of *Mission's* mission. If, as Victor Hunter suggests, ("What and So What," July, 1975), those Christians serving Christ within the Churches of Christ are to "grow up in Christ," and if this growth is to occur at the grassroots level, appropriate and continual nourishment will be needed. I trust that, as before, *Mission* will continue to help supply the need.

MIKE SPRADLIN
Warner Robins, Ga.

Outgrowing the Need to Scream

I have enjoyed the first two issues of *Mission* under the new leadership. *Mission* has always been very candid. That is good, but some of us are getting almost bored, hearing the negative repetitions of cliches about the baddies of the Church of Christ. As children grow up, it seems almost natural that they will rebel against their parents, schools, churches, anything old, and in their eyes, moldy. When they mature, they learn to recognize the good as well as the bad in these things and outgrow the need to scream, yell, and react passionately to every dark corner. I hope *Mission* does this and becomes a positive force in our lives; that it becomes good news; that it keeps its stimulating appeal to our minds and our spirits.

RICK HALL
Port Arthur, Texas